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ABSTRACT

This study examines the activities which Head Start parents actually engaged in and the facts they learned at the 14th annual conference held in New Orleans in April, 1987 and the 15th annual conference held in Salt Lake City in May 1988. At the 14th annual conference, 70 parents voluntarily attended a workshop advertised in the conference bulletin and completed a trip report. The general categories of the questionnaire were: (1) preparation for coming to the conference; (2) conference activities attended; (3) suggestions to improve your own program; (4) personal improvement; and (5) final comments. At the 15th annual conference, 68 people attended a similar workshop and completed an improved but similar report. Some of the findings of the conferences include that: (1) child care was the major arrangement that had to made before going to the conference; (2) the conference, for many, was an experience which led to the enhancement of their skills, self-confidence, and sense of independence in fostering an environment in which their own children could develop to their full potential; (3) parents learned about their rights as parents in the program and their responsibilities as parents of young children; and (4) most parents agreed that they had a wonderful time and that they learned a great deal. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations are discussed in relation to the findings from each conference. (RJC)

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WHAT DO HEAD START PARENTS REALLY LEARN AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE?

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The National Head Start Association sponsors an annual training conference, usually held in large, expensive conference hotels in major American cities. According to Bern Gentry of Together, Inc., who managed several of the conferences, the amount of money spent on the conference and related expenses totals about one million dollars annually (1987). Over 4000 people gather at each conference, about half of whom are very low income, minority parents, whose children are enrolled in Head Start, and the other half of whom are Head Start staff members, (Gentry, 1987). The question has arisen as to whether or not this is a good use of federal funding. In the conference a learning situation, or simply an expensive, week long party?

The purpose of this study was to begin to look at what Head Start parents actually did and learned at the fourteenth annual conference, held in New Orleans in April, 1987.

Parents voluntarily came to a workshop advertised in the conference bulletin as "For Parents Only: Using What You've Learned at the Conference Back Home." The subheading read "Objective: to assist parents in reflecting about what they've learned at the conference in order to motivate them to act when they get home." At the workshop, parents were given a four-page form entitled "HEAD START CONFERENCE TRIP REPORT" which had been duplicated on carbon paper so that both the parent and the facilitator could keep a copy.

The objectives for using such a questionnaire were:

1. to help parents assess their experience at the conference
2. to help parents organize their learning into a meaningful form to take back to their local programs

Presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November, 1987.

3. to help parents develop the professionalism of writing a trip report and the feeling of accountability to their programs for funding the trip
4. to collect information for this study.

INSTRUMENTATION

The above mentioned questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions and a check list of activities attended. The questions were based on the facilitator's past observations and conversations at the other National Head Start Association conferences.

The general categories on the questionnaire were:

1. Preparation for coming to the conference
2. Conference activities attended
3. Suggestions to improve your own program (new ideas from other parents and from workshops)
4. Personal improvement
5. Final comments.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

70 Head Start parents completed all or most of the report form. They represented programs in 24 states and the District of Columbia. About half were from cities and about half were from small towns or rural areas. Black females were predominant in the group; there were three males, four Caucasians, and four Hispanics.

This self-selected group attended a one and a half hour workshop on Friday afternoon at the 1987 National Head Start Association Training Conference in New Orleans (the conference ended on Saturday).

Local Head Start programs footed the bill for most parents to participate either through parent activity funds or travel funds, according to the parents. Five parents reported that parent groups raised money to send them and three parents paid some of their own expenses (one used her income tax refund!)

Parents were selected to attend the conference in a number of ways:

1. It's automatic in the local program that the Policy Council chairperson goes - 10 (one parent said she's the Policy Council chairperson's girlfriend and she insisted upon going).

2. Other parents chose (by a variety of means) - 8
3. Someone else couldn't go -6
4. Greatest number of volunteer hours - 9
5. Chosen by staff - 5
6. Lottery - 5
7. Variations of the theme, including writing an essay, submitting a resume, and just volunteering to go - 24.

FINDINGS

Planning to come to the conference

Predictably, the greatest number of parents responded that child care was the major arrangement they had to make before coming to the conference. Many grandmothers, fathers, and boyfriends were tapped for child care service all across America! Pre-planning clothing and food were also mentioned frequently.

Planning a trip to an unfamiliar city involves a myriad of predicting and problem solving skills. Parents mentioned not only learning how to pack but also what to pack for hot weather. The majority of the parents mentioned that staff had make all the arrangements ("Everything was planned - I just came"), with varying results ranging from feeling that the staff was helpful and supportive to "Everything was handled for us and ended up pretty medicore." Some housing and transportation problems were mentioned. "Everything was so high" in the convention hotels was one planning problem. Another parent mentioned that she had learned to keep receipts for the money she had spent. Most parents mentioned organization as something they had learned or been concern about - not only their own but the staffs' and the conference organizers'. One parent learned "not to have another person make your reservations for you."

The majority of the parents who answered the questions about which of their conference experiences were "firsts" in their lives stated that this was their first time ever away from home, and/or the first time they had been away from their child(ren) for any length of time. Some first experienced plane or train rides, or conferences, or hotels, or "tourist traps," or catfish.

In the workshop dialogue, one Caucasian parent mentioned that it was her first exposure to a racially integrated group and that she was

learning about herself and her Black roommates, about cultural differences and about universal Head Start parent concerns.

Two parents wrote that they were spending money on themselves for the first time ("First time I've been able to buy new clothes and chosen for me.")

Events actually attended

Parents were asked to check off the conference events which they had attended. The reported range was from two to fourteen events (workshops, general sessions, etc.). The mean attendance was 9.27 events, a remarkably high figure given the fact that this data was collected on Friday afternoon and there was no attempt to control for parents' arrival time when asking this question.

Personal improvement

The responses to the questions on personal improvement read like a performance standard litany on parent involvement!

When asked what the learned about themselves, parents responded in ways which would seem to confirm that the conference was "an experience(s)...which lead(s) to enhancing the development of their skills, self-confidence, and sense of independence in fostering an environment in which their own children can develop to their full potential." (Head Start, 1984). One parent said she learned that "I can do more that I thought," and many others responded similarly 1) "I have more power than I thought in Head Start," 2) "I don't take out enough time out for myself." 3. "I'm capable of listening and socializing with other parents and relating to them," 4. "I've got a lot to learn," and 5. "That I must feel good about myself before I can be a successful parent."

On the issue of themselves as parents, many responses sounded as if the conference met the parent involvement performance standard objective: "Provide a planned program of experiences and activities which support and enhance the parental role as the principal influence in their child's education and development," (Head Start, 1984). "I feel like I'm a very good parent," was the most common response. (10 percent).

Other interesting responses to the question about parenting included:

1. "I was disciplining my children in a negative way. I learned to discipline in a positive way. Can't wait to try it."
2. "I have to concentrate on being more patient and understanding."
3. "I must know who I am and where I am going before I can teach my children who they are. I feel real good about myself since I came here to this Head Start conference."
4. "That getting or being involved in your child's education improves the self-confidence of that child."
5. "I can still teach and reinforce to my child at home what my child has learned at school."

In discussing plans for personal changes when they got home, the most common response included getting other parents more involved with their center (12 parents said this). Four parents said, "To say no a little more often," and five parents mentioned not yelling at their children but taking time out to listen.

Other interesting responses included:

1. "Working closer with my older children in their school work because all my time has been going to Head Start. They make me remember that there is life after Head Start."
2. "My daughter and I will learn and change some behavior problems we have."
3. "Express to all parents that even a little bit of involvement is better than none."
4. "To improve my relationships with my family-especially my kids. And I'm going to try to be more active in Policy Council and Parent Committee. Also let my husband know that he cannot let me down - because I'm going to do what I want because I learn by myself - and I did this because I knew I was going to learn a lot and I did - and it was very exciting and scary and fun too."
5. "I will not be discouraged by the lack of support from executive director, grantee, and inactive parents."
6. "Try to be more open to try to understand my child's feelings, thoughts, wants, need, desires, fears, and angers."

New ideas

Parents reported learning a host of new ideas, most of which revolved around their rights as parents in the program (70.2) and their responsibilities as parents of young children. Four parents said, "Don't sign anything without thinking and knowing what you are signing." It was a surprise to many parents that staff members are not required to be at all Policy Council meetings. The need for more parent involvement and ways to accomplish this were frequently mentioned. The accessibility of Mr. Rick Johnson, head of Head Start parent involvement nationally, was the source of a lengthy and very positive discussion during the workshop.

Ideas for local newspaper and head start newsletter

This turned out to be a weak question, partly because it came late in the discussion and partly because many Head Starts do not have a parent newsletter of any kind. Five parents mentioned sending a photograph of themselves into the newspaper, while others thought advocating for Head Start in a public forum would be appropriate. Some participants noted what they would tell other parents: 1) "Learn to help your child instead of watching 'All My Children,'" 2) "You missed a great experience," 3) "That if you're a parent start being and acting like one - take and spend some of your time with your child," and 4) "I made friends from all over the U.S."

What the public should know about head start

"Head Start is alive and kicking all across the United States," said three parents. It is a "super program," it is "not a baby-sitting service," it is "for everyone, not just special ed.," it is a "program for the betterment of mankind," said other parents. One stressed that, "this is not just a trip - it is a learning experience!"

Learned about head start nationally

It seemed a universal relief to discover that every Head Start program has its problems! Many parents were surprised to find how different local programs can be. Again, Rick Johnson's name was

frequently mentioned: "National level is not like heaven. You can get through to them," or "If there is a problem at the local level, no matter where you live, Washington does listen and take action." Meeting other Head Start parents from across the country was an important theme: "Head Start parents are so nice and friendly."

One comment stood out: "Head Start had helped people to become leaders, to believe in themselves, and not to be satisfied with a 'low' life-style."

Politics

Eleven parents said something like, "We have pull and need to use it. Register and vote. Read between the lines, Vote for Head Start." Other parents were discouraged by the notion that politics influence Head Start: "I realize that it is necessary to lobby for monies, yet I think it is sad to see politics and education mixed."

One parent noted that the politics in the National Head Start Association seemed cliquish to her.

Attend again or recommend the conference to someone else?

All but one parent said that they would come to the National Conference again if they could and that they would recommend it to other parents. The dissenter, who was Caucasian, had difficulty with being in the minority and had taken offense at the comments made at a sessions on Black children. She said, "I'm not sure. I don't relish the idea at this tie, but I believe the future parent will need supportive, informed leaders to represent them."

Several parents mentioned that one can "learn so much at the conference you can't learn at the program level." Many mentioned learning from each other and enjoyed sharing ideas and problems. "You find out how great Head Start really is."

Difficulties encountered

About half the parents said they had encountered no difficulties at the conference. The high cost of eating out in a city hotel came as a surprise to some; three people had run out of funds.

Four people mentioned being housed in a hotel far from the conference site and transportation was a major problem for them. Two got isolated from their program group. Several parent waited for over an hour to get into their rooms. Individuals mentioned getting lost, feeling the heat, and getting sun poisoning. By far, the greatest concerns were expressed about workshop cancellations and over crowding. The message seems clear that parents were eager to absorb as much as they could from the conference and they were frustrated to be denied any learning opportunity.

Disappointments

Fewer than half of the parent said that they were disappointed with the conference. Some workshops were cancelled, some were hard ("impossible") to find, and some were very crowded. Many parents wished there had been more time for workshops.

Problems of distance and finance already mentioned surfaced on this question again.

Two very different issues met with parental bitterness: 1) "Region II is not recognized and introduced like other regions," and 2) [I was disappointed] "only in our program's disorganization."

Final comments

Most parents agreed that they had a wonderful time and that they had learned a great deal. Many mentioned wanting to tell other parents of their rights and hoped to come again to learn more. For example: "I really enjoyed most of the workshops I attended, I did a lot of writing, and I'm very glad I was chosen to come to New Orleans, and if given a chance I'd attend another," or "I am thankful for the chance to come to the conference to learn and grow to better myself and to be able to tell others about it. I would come in a heartbeat for the experiences I have had, not only the fun of meeting other people but all the workshops that help you grown."

One woman summed it up: "All in all, I see for the first time how a National Head Start Conference is and that we as a group can work together and keep our voices strong and let those people know that we aim to keep on going and we will never give up till all our children

are grown and let them know that these services or programs are what made them stronger."

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clearly, based on this sample, Head Start parents see the conference as a learning experience. They enjoy the conference but do not see it just as an opportunity to party.
2. The planning stage before coming to the conference is rich in learning opportunities for the parents. The danger is that well-meaning staff may rob parents of the chance: "I didn't learn anything [about planning for the trip] because it was all done for me," Implications for focus of control and self-esteem are tremendous in a statement like this and others made by parents in the workshop, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

   Whenever possible, it seems optimal that a parent know at least three months in advance that s/he is going to the conference. This time frame would allow staff to discuss arrangements and include parents in on decision making. It would also insure that parents would be more likely to get into the major hotels and would avoid wasting time on transportation.

   Parents are experiencing new phenomena at a tremendous rate. Their awareness of other life-styles, geographic locating, modes of transportations and socioeconomic issues is potentially enhanced when they are at the conference, but to a greater extent if they are included in the planning.
3. Most attendees with whom the facilitator spoke in New Orleans who had also been to the conference the previous year in Portland, Oregon, noted tremendous improvements. Having the conference housed almost exclusively in two hotels right across the street from each other dramatically cut down on the number of lost and frustrated people. However, because most of the parents are new to huge conference hotels, several recommended that a map of each hotel be included in the brochure and that the room names or numbers listed include the floor number (e.g., Grand Ballroom Section 3, 2nd floor, Sheraton Hotel).

4. Parents mentioned that if they were to write about their experience for their hometown newspapers or Head Start newsletters they would include a photograph of themselves at the conference. An inexpensive photograph of each parent at the conference would enable this potentially positive public relations piece to happen.
5. A welcoming committee of local Head Start parents in each major hotel would help parents get acclimated upon arrival. One of the most significant things about the conference in the minds of many parents was the opportunity to meet other parents from across the country.
6. Parents did go to planned sessions! They would even have gone to more had there not been cancellations, frustrations, and a high fee to get into the luncheon. It seems inevitable that some of the workshops will have to be cancelled at the last moment, but instead of announcing to a room full of people that there will be not workshop and that they will have to go late to another place which may already be overcrowded and may also be some distance away, it would seem appropriate to get a substitute. Optimally, this substitute would be able to speak on the announced topic, if not they would be able to speak on some other topic of equal or universal importance to Head Start parents. A "Dear Abby" format where parents could ask questions of a child development specialist would be an example. This would save a tremendous amount of precious time and nervous energy! The parents enjoyed their sessions with Rick Johnson tremendously and felt empowered after meeting him. If he and/or other popular facilitators could be available to step into a room filled with parents without facilitators no learning time would be lost.
7. Helping parents with their responsibility to carry the message of the conference back to local programs could be enhanced. Parents seemed to like the idea of a trip report - one woman said she was planning to do one but didn't know where to begin. A form could be included in the back of the conference brochure for parents to fill out as they attended sessions and heard good ideas which they wanted to remember for their own programs.

8. Another planning form which could be included in the front of the brochure would list daily schedules with the general sessions and their locations blocked in.
9. The messages the parents are getting appear to be very consistent with the performance standards.

This study merely looked at what parents said when they were at the conference. Further study is needed to see if in fact Head Start parents actually follow through on their plans made at the conference after they get home.

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WHAT DO HEAD START PARENTS REALLY LEARN AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE? PART II

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INTRODUCTION

The Fifteenth Annual National Head Start Association Training Conference was held in May of 1988 in Salt Lake City, Utah. An estimated 3000 Head Start parents and staff members attended.

The same workshop format and objectives described in the preceding paper were followed. Again, parents kept one copy of the "Trip Report" and the facilitator kept the other.

INSTRUMENTATION

An improved questionnaire/"Trip Report" included the following categories:

1) Preparation for coming to the conference

2) Specific conference activity attendance
   a) Workshops (and what was learned)
   b) Kiddie Konference (which was cancelled)
   c) Tours (and what was seen)
   d) Exhibits
   e) Regional Meetings (and what was discussed)
   f) General Sessions (and what was learned)
   g) Social Activities

3) Personal Improvement

4) Program Improvement

5) Suggestions for the conference next year

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

68 Head Start parents completed all or most of the report form. They represented programs from 28 states and the District of Columbia. While the two preceding statements are very similar to the first sample, the racial breakdown was very different; about half the group was Black, about half Caucasian. There were 3 males, several Chicanos, and several Native American Indians in the group.

This self-selected group attended a two hour workshop from 8:30-10:30 a.m. on Saturday, just prior to the closing session of the conference.

Four parents had come to the conference with less than one week's notice; five had known they were coming for a year. Most parents had been preparing for one month or more.

The vast majority (63) of the parents reported that Head Start program funds had paid their ways. Parent fundraising had sent five participants and two parents had partially paid their own ways. They reported range in cost was $200 to $1600, with most people estimating that $400-$900 were spent on their trips. About one third of the respondents did not know how much it had cost.

Parents were selected in ways similar to those reported by the previous group (Policy Council chairpersons or members, parents chosen, representatives, exceptional volunteers, lottery winners, etc.).

FINDINGS

Planning to come to the conference

Variations on the child care theme again were obviously the most mentioned arrangements made. One parent had to find three

separate solutions to meet her children's disparate needs. Preparing food and doing laundry in advance were also important to some parents.

When it came to planning to come to the conference, parents were amazed at how much time and energy it took. Many realized that they had learned new organizational skills -- or should have: "I needed to go to a class for being more organized," wrote one parent. One mother was pleased to find that "When I needed my oldest daughter, she was there to help."

The list of "first experiences" revealed that almost two-thirds of the parents were coming to their first major conference. Almost half of them had flown for the first time, and about one-quarter were away from home for the first time.

Difficulties in getting to the conference appeared minimal. Parents reported only two flights missed, a lost ticket, two plane delays, and two nervous people who couldn't find gas in the desert!

Difficulties at the conference

Over half the participants reporting experienced no difficulties at the conference.

There was a distinct impression that "the good workshops were scheduled at the same time," or that they "overlapped." Overcrowded workshops and cancellations were frustrating. Parents suggested substitute speakers to avoid cancellations and re-runs of popular workshops to avoid overcrowding. Also suggested were: 1) "roving helpers to point out directions," 2) "a day-long single-parent workshop," and 3) earlier distribution of conference brochures for planning.

Events actually attended

Workshops: Parents reported that they attended all kinds of workshops. The mean attendance was 5.3 workshops per parent, and the range was 2-12 workshops attended. Parents were asked to summarize what they had learned in a sentence or two.

Predictably, there was great variability in parents' writing skills, but on the whole this format seemed more revealing than the checklist of the previous year.

Tours: The availability of the free walking tours and concerts in the Mormons' Temple Square was a unique conference opportunity. Although almost half of the workshop participants reported that they did not go on any tours, one-third had been to Temple Square. Other parents had been to a children's art exhibit, been to Brigham Young's Beehive House, seen the copper mines, or ridden through the mountains.

Exhibits: Although about one-third of the parents did not report having gone to the exhibits, there was great enthusiasm for the exhibits expressed in the workshop. Parents seemed to thoroughly enjoy browsing, picking up literature, and interacting with vendors.

Regional meeting: Less than one-third of the respondents attended their regional meetings. Some did not even know their regions, others had been heavily involved in regional politics prior to coming to the conference. Those who did attend reported that the business of the meetings had been election of officers and national representatives, discussion of pending federal legislation, networking, and information sharing.

General sessions: Two-thirds of the reports indicated that parents had attended and enjoyed the opening session. "Absolutely excellent," "wonderful," "well-spoken," "witty, encouraging," and "remarkable" were some of the descriptions of Jack Anderson. The Osmond Boys and the Young Astronaut theme were apparently thought to be excellent choices.

The general sessions on pending federal legislation (ABC and Smart Start) as well as the National Head Start Parents Association meeting appeared to be sources of confusion and frustration for those few parents who said they attended them.

Social activities: Close to half of the parents reported that they did not attend any social activities. Those who included the luncheon in this category raved about Kwame Salter as a speaker ("A-1") The Polynesian show, regional socials and receptions, the talent show, and the western roundup were mentioned by five or fewer parents. Informal small groups seemed to be preferred method of socializing.

PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT

In looking at themselves as parents and conference participants, respondents again clearly showed that the goals of Head Start and the conference were being met for this sample. Nine parents vowed to get more involved in Head Start and to take more responsibility. Many wrote something about feeling better about themselves as people and as parents as a result of the conference. Thirteen mentioned planning to take more time for themselves, to re-evaluate their lives, to stop procrastinating, or to begin a C.D.A. program.

Sharing their problems with other parents led participants to feel that they were not alone in their personal, parental, and program struggles. "My life is enhanced when I share with others," said one parent. Two parents were surprised at how easily they fit into a new place and met new people. Other comments included realizing that there was so much to learn about children and about Head Start.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

17 respondents had no suggestions for improvement (some seem to have confused what was intended to be a question on their programs back home with the conference program).

In this item, the response clearly showed that these parents had benefitted from the workshops. Five parents wanted to see curricular change to include more science, dance, and/or music in the classroom. Three were anxious to institute a Family Day so

that parents could get to know each other. Other specific suggestions included:

1) starting support groups for parents
2) having information on sexuality and sexual abuse available to parents and teachers
3) adopting a sister agency
4) implementing a grandparents program
5) recognizing volunteers and parent participation
6) beginning a Young Astronauts program

Five parents specifically said they would work on fundraisers so that more parents could come to the conference next year.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE

All but one parent said they would like to come to the conference next year, and she did not explain. The lone dissenter on recommending the conference to other parents cited "no money" as the reason. Most parents viewed the conference as a "growth experience." They were anxious to "learn what's going on and how to help." They found the conference motivating, "energizing" (as one speaker said) and encouraging. Many felt a tremendous responsibility to take information back to their home programs.

Seven respondents recommended no changes be made in the conference next year. Other suggestions ranged from having nothing going on from 12 to 1 (to accommodate the needs of diabetics), to increasing the number of hours in the day to accommodate everything. Some of the recommendations which the parents seemed to feel especially strongly about in the workshop discussion were:

1) a workshop for policy council chairpersons, should be planned (perhaps a panel of new and seasoned chairpersons leading a rap group)

2) tours of local programs need to be reinstituted
3) substitutes should be provided if the workshop facilitators don't show up
4) "good" workshops should not be scheduled at the same time
5) the conference announcement should come out earlier
6) popular workshops should be offered twice to accommodate the spill-over crowd
7) the single parenting workshop should last all day
8) there should be more handouts for parents

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the opportunity to go on a gambling trip, only 10% of this self-selected sample actually went. Some parents reported being too busy going to scheduled conference events to take time for self-indulgence! In contrast to the party stereotype, many parents expressed feelings of stress because they could not "cover" <u>all</u> the workshops and <u>all</u> the general sessions.

2. In addition to the previous year's suggestion about including parents in the planning to come to the conference three months prior to departure, it became evident that a sizable number (about one third) of parents had no idea how much it cost to send them to the conference. This appears to the author to be a vital issue for two reasons: a) budgeting and understanding finances and b) appreciating the opportunity and taking responsibility for representing the local program.

3. The proximity of the hotels, the Salt Palace Conference Hall, and the local sights to be seen seemed to help parents get acclimated quickly to Salt Lake City. But still, with over half of this sample indicating that this was their first major conference, it seems appropriate to continue to suggest ways of helping them organize and

maximize their participation in events. For example, in addition to this kind of culminating workshop, perhaps a workshop early in the week called something like "For Parents Only: How to Get the Most Out of the Conference" might be useful.

4. Despite the phone calls to presenters the week before the conference to confirm attendance, there were still cancellations and "no shows." Last year's recommendation that a group of substitutes stand ready to facilitate either a similar or a substitute workshop till seems appropriate.

5. One parent filled out the "Trip Report" in Spanish, reminding the facilitator that all Head Start materials need to be translated into Spanish, even at the conference.

6. A workshop on the history of Head Start would be helpful to new staff and parents. The accomplishments of the last twenty-three years are well known to the "old-timers," but would help newcomers get a perspective, particularly in understanding some of the strong reactions to new legislation, to position statements, etc.

7. Parents at the workshop were adamant in their suggestion that the single parent workshop be expanded into a full-day seminar. Given the strength of their feelings and the Head Start "family" demographics, this idea might bear some consideration.

8. Some parents seem to learn best in informal settings, for example, when viewing the exhibits or when visiting other Head Start centers. They really missed the opportunity to see local programs in Salt Lake City. Perhaps the learning experience at the exhibits could be enhanced by

encouraging vendors to make their displays more parent interactive.

Whenever there are very large groups of people at a conference, there will be people who have suggestions for change. The National Head Start Association Annual Training Conferences have continuously provided a unique learning experience for both staff and parents. It is hoped that some of these suggestions will be discussed in planning for future conferences in order to keep the conference as one parents described it: "It's such a beautiful learning, growing experience."